1: Radcliffe-Brown E-5 (1906-1908)1922
AZ2 Andamans AZ2

164 estimated that the mortality from measles and its sequelae was
165 one-half if not two-thirds of the whole population of the Great Andaman. Other diseases which were formerly unknown to the islands seem also to have been introduced, including influenza.

●163 While the death-rate amongst the friendly Andamanese has been enormously increased, the birth-rate has at the same time fallen to almost nothing. This is evident from the proportion of adults to children in the population table given above. In 1907, out of a total of about 500 natives whom I saw at different times, there were not more than a dozen children of less than five years old. A birth is a rare occurrence, and of the children born very few survive infancy.

165 This decrease of population has not as yet affected the
619 Little Andaman. The natives of this island have had very little contact with the Penal Settlement or with the tribes of the Great Andaman, and have thus escaped the diseases which are mainly responsible for the depopulation of the larger island.

Several attempts have been made to estimate the former population of the Andamans. In the "Census Report" for 1901 the estimate given is 4800 for the whole group. Mr M. V. Portman has given an estimate of 8000. It seemed to me that one of these is too small and the other too large. Judging from what it is possible to learn about the habits of the natives, and the food supply available, I should estimate that the former population of the islands (in 1858) was about 5500[1]. An estimate for the proportion of the different groups is as follows:—

	Estimated former population.	Density per square mile.
North Andaman (four tribes)	1500	2·75
Middle Andaman with Baratang and Ritchie's Archipelago	2250	2·5
South Andaman (Aka-Bea and Jarawa) . .	1200	2·0
Little Andaman and North Sentinel . .	700	1·75
Total . .	5650	2·25

[1] This estimate is based on what the Andamanese were able to tell me of the conditions under which they formerly lived. Of course such an estimate can only be of small value. I think it is more probable that I have underestimated the former population than that I have overestimated it.

2: Man G-5 (1869-1880)1932 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

not at the hands of their mothers, but of the male members of the tribe.

Reproduction.—1. Marriages never take place till both parties have attained maturity, and generally not till a few years later; the usual age of the bridegroom varies from 18 to 22, and of the bride from 16 to 20. The result of inquiries tends to show that there is a slight predominance of female over male births; three or four is the average number of children born of the same parents. The largest family known consisted of six, three only of whom attained maturity.[1]

2. Twins are rare, and as no instance can be recalled of both surviving infancy, notwithstanding all possible care being bestowed on them, they are not favourably regarded. No case of triplets has been known to occur. Births out of wedlock are considered discreditable, and in the one known instance of the kind, the parents were married immediately after the event; no difference was made in the treatment which the child received.[2]

3. The limited fecundity of the women may in some measure be due to the circumstance that they never wean their babies, so long as they are able to suckle them, and it not unfrequently happens that the two youngest children are seen together at their mother's breast.[3]

4. The ill success in rearing their offspring is doubtless owing in most part to the injudicious management and petting which each of the mother's friends considers right to bestow on the infant. It is looked upon as a compliment for every woman who may be nursing, to relieve the mother of this duty at frequent intervals; it is, therefore, no matter of surprise that the little one ails and dies.

5. The proportion of deaths from violence and accident, is believed to amount to four or five per cent.

6. Barrenness is rare, as are also cases of stillborn children. No drugs or other contrivances are employed in order to increase or limit reproduction.

Abnormalities.—1. Excessive development of fat about the gluteal region is frequently observable among the adult women.

[1] It is said that more children are born during the rains than at any other season of the year.

[2] *Vide post* "Marriage," paragraph 4.

[3] On this subject Dr. Brander remarks as follows:—

"They mostly possess considerable mammary development, and the glands in many cases seem to be in a chronic state of functional activity. This may be due to the late period to which they suckle their young (even to three or four years), or to another purpose to which the milk is applied. . . ." (*vide post*, "Shaving.") [As will be seen from Plate II. fig. 1, the mammæ are pyriform rather than spherical: with the advance of years they become flaccid and elongated.]

145 582 to about 60 to 65, if he reaches "old age." Except as to marriage at an earlier age, about 18, these figures apply fairly to the women also, who, however, live somewhat longer than the men, retaining in old age both health and mental faculties.

●163 [853] **Reproduction.**—The marriages are infructuous, though barrenness is uncommon, a couple rarely producing families of even moderate size and many none at all. The child-bearing age is from 16 to 35; weaning is much delayed.

291 147 **Endurance.**—Left to themselves the Andamanese go stark naked and with head uncovered, except that the women wear, as clothing and not ornament, one or more leaves in front and a bunch of leaves tied round the waist behind, or a tassel of leaves all round. Jarawas, however, of both sexes have been seen entirely naked. They dislike and fear cold, but not heat, though they avoid exposure to the sun; and being accustomed to gratify every sensation as it arises, they endure thirst, hunger, want of sleep, fatigue and bodily discomfort badly. Want of sleep, such as occurs at their dances for occasionally as much as [482] four days and nights, exhausts them greatly. A man's load is 40 lbs. and his distance 15 miles for a day or two only. After that he will rest, whatever the urgency.

252 262 **Food.**—The food consists of fish, pork, turtle, iguana, "wild cat" (*paradoxurus sp.*), shell-fish, turtle eggs, certain larvæ, and a great variety of fruit, seeds, roots, and honey, and is plentiful both by sea and land. They never starve, though they are habitually heavy eaters. The food is always cooked and commonly eaten very hot. As much as possible of an animal is eaten and the Andamanese, like most hunters, have found out the dietary value of tripe. The Andamanese are expert cooks and adept at preparing delicacies from parts of animals and fish.

142 **Skin.**—The skin, which is smooth, greasy and satiny, varies in colour from an intense sheeny black to a reddish brown on the unexposed parts and also on the collar bones, cheeks and other prominences of the body. Its general appearance has been likened to a "black-leaded stove." The scalp, the lips and nostrils are black, and there are black patches on the palate. The soles of the feet are brownish yellow. The Bojigngiji Group (South Andaman) are the darkest, and among the Onges parts of the face are a light reddish-brown. The Jarawas are distinctly fairer than the rest, the general colour being a deep reddish brown. Leucoderma occurs on the fingers and lips.

Hair.—The hair varies from a sooty black to dark and light brown, yellowish brown and red. The general appearance of it is sooty black or yellowish brown. Except on the head the hair is scanty, but not absent: on the head it grows in small rings, which give it the appearance of growing in tufts, though it is really closely and evenly distributed over the whole scalp. Limited baldness is unknown, but temporary general baldness after disease occurs with a weak growth [302] of the hair afterwards. The hair is not shaved, except on the head and eyebrows, and each tribe has, with many fantastic individual variants, its own [145] method of wearing it. It turns grey at about 40, but white hair is not common.

Shaving is "woman's work" and was performed by small flakes of quarts, but nowadays flakes from the kicks of glass bottles are substituted. It is effective and close, but a painful operation on an European's face, as I proved by personal experience many years ago.

Bodily Parts.—The mouth is large, the palate hard and highly arched, the lips well formed. The hands and feet are small and well made. The ears are small and well shaped, the eyes are generally dark to a very dark brown, bright, liquid and clear, but prominent with slightly elevated outer angles and become dulled with age. The teeth, in the young, except amongst the Onges, are white, good and on the whole free from disease. Those of the Onges are irregular and discoloured. As age advances the teeth generally lose their whiteness and become worn, but without much caries. The teeth are roughly used without any care whatever. Dentition is early.

164 **Diseases.**—The muscular strength of the Andamanese is great, but their vitality is nevertheless low, and the apparently robust quickly die after sickening

In a recent paper Dr. N. DATTA-MAJUMDER, Director, Department of Anthropology, Government of India, writes:

"From a study of 34 Onge families contacted by us, it is found that the average size of the family is only 3.15. Thirteen families out of 34 are childless. That is, 38.2% of the married couples are sterile".

When, in 1946, proposals were made for undertaking work for the amelioration of the conditions of the inhabitants of the Andaman Islands along the same line as had been done among the Bhil and other tribes of Central India, Dr. B. S. GUHA, at that time Director of the Department of Anthropology, very reasonably observed that "the problem of the aborigines of the Andaman Islands is not the same as that of the other primitive tribes of India", and that "the need among them is not so much the spread of education and social uplift as the arrest in the decline in population which has been most alarming".

The Ongi have been in sporadic contact with the outside world for many years. They have been visiting Port Blair, particularly since some of them moved to Rutland Island on the southern tip of Great Andaman. This contact with civilization was bound to affect their material culture, as well as their whole mentality. We may again quote Dr. DATTA-MAJUMDER who says:

"As a result of this long contact the Onge have already come to appreciate a number of foreign articles, for example, tobacco leaves, tea leaves, sugar, matches, aluminium utensils and implements made of iron (especially bill-hooks and files). In order to secure these articles, they often barter away their valuable honey and shells. The afore-mentioned changes in material culture have at present touched only the fringe of Onge culture. But the demand for these articles (especially tobacco leaves and safety matches) is becoming so great that Onge culture is likely to be vitally affected in the near future".

Dr. DATTA-MAJUMDER came to the conclusion that "the hunting and food-gathering Onge culture, which had been an autonomous cultural system in the past, is now breaking down".

The Ongi were repeatedly visited by government officers, but the resulting information is paltry. PORTMAN spent several months among the coastal groups of Little Andaman in 1886 and 1887 and collected a few hundred words of their language. In 1901, C. BODEN KLOSS visited a group of Ongi on Rutland Island and one on Little Andaman, both only for a few hours. At some time between 1906 and 1908, A. R. RADCLIFFE-BROWN went to Little Andaman for several weeks and made a preliminary study of the Ongi language. In 1928, EGON VON EICKSTEDT spent a few weeks among the Ongi on Rutland Island and visited briefly several groups on the coast of Little Andaman for the sake of physical anthropological research.

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Negritos

The Andamanese are almost non-existent and at present only 23 are surviving. Sri Shivdasani writes,[1] "I met only 20 of them in the camp at Long Island and was surprised to see that the youngest child there was about 9 years old, possibly a half breed". This goes a long way to prove the extremely poor fertility of the Andamanese. This has been further substantiated by Dr. Sarkar on analysis of the reproductive capacities of 100 aboriginal women of the Andamans from the original data collected by Portman. 163

Table No. 2

Reproductive lives of the Andamanese Women.

	North Andamanese	South Andamanese
No. of women	50	50
Less married	4	1
	46	49
Unproductive marriages	21	17
	25	32
Average children per mother	2.86	2.81
Average living children per mother	0.92	0.38
Sex-ratio	39m : 20f	52m : 38f
Net reproductive index	0.36	0.16

Source. Sarkar, S. S.—The origin and migration of the Negritoes in the Andaman Islands, Man in India, Vol. 33, No. 4, Oct-Dec, 1953. [113]

As is evident from the above table, of the 100 women, 38 had unproductive marriages and 5 remained unmarried. The case of 43 women out of 100 can easily be set apart because of their unproductivity. This high percentage of unproductivity is really an alarming factor and the average number of children per mother is 2.83 but the average number of living children per mother is less. This ultimately results in a decline in the population number.

The Jarawa population, according to the 1951 census, is estimated in between 300 and 400. Further details about their demographic characteristics are not available. 162

1 Shivdasani, H. R. Report of the possibilities of colonisation and development of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, 1949.

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onge

162 boys and girls and children of the widows. The break-up of the total population is given below.

Table No 3

	Male	Female
Adult	46	61
Child	30	24
	76	85

On the consideration of the total population, there is a 5.6% excess of the female population over the male population.

However, the further break-up of the total number of Onges counted by Sri Nigam reveals some of the most important demographic characteristics of the Onge population. Considering only the 45 family units, it is found that there is a preponderance of males over the females as is evident from the table below.

Table No 4

	Individuals			Children		
No. of families	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
45	75	67	138	26	22	48

162 589 The Onge of the 'unattached' type, therefore, are comprised of 5 males and 18 females. Of this 10 are widows. So the predominance of the females among the Onges may be due to a higher percentage of widows whereas the widowers are much less in number. This throws another 165 important light on the logevity of the Onge males and females. The females, as it stands, have a longer life than males and this is not only a very important aspect of the Onge population but also of the other tribes of the world. In Africa also such a higher longevity of the females is discernible which is due, as is commonly believed to higher resistive power of the females to fight the odds of life compared to the males.

163 The fertility of the adult females are also extremely poor. He writes[1] in 'the total of 61 adult females there were 10 widows who were too old for child-bearing, 4 married women with their child-bearing period finished, while there were 8 married women with no possibility of any issue. Thus

1 Nigam, R. C.—Little known tribes of the Andaman Islands—Their problems & prospects; Vanyajati, Vol. VIII, July, 1960. No. 3.

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Negritos

in the sample of 61 adult females, 22 women were nonfecund. As such the obvious female preponderance in the total sample is not of much value and the total picture of Onge population is rather that of decline only.' Such a decline of the fertility of the Andamanese women has already been pointed out.

Of all the aboriginal population, the Onges are to-day the most widespread and have undoubtedly a very balanced sex-ratio. As regards the fertility, there is a gradual unproductiveness amongst all the aboriginal population. The Andamanese who are on the last legs of the decay have the youngest child of more than 10 years. Nothing definite can be said about the Jarawas and the Sentinelese but they are also on the verge of their decay.

PROBLEMS OF THE ABORIGINES

Assessment of the socio-economic and cultural problems is always subjective and a true assessment is only possible through the first-hand intimate acquaintance of the aborigines. The aboriginal population of the world to-day present a very gloomy picture of stagnation or decay and the aboriginal population of the Andamans are undoubtedly sharing this dismal fate of decay.

Only after the impact of the people having better material attainments the problems of the aborigines have been aggravated that paved the path of total ruination of their socio-economic traits and also initiated their gradual numerical decay. Such evidences of decay only in the last few centuries are within view in the case of the American Indians which formerly having 268 groups have dwindled to only 67 groups now surviving when the rest have been wiped out. The case of the aboriginal population of Australia, Tasmania, Malanesian Islands and the others of southeast Asia present such a gloomy picture. The causes of such a decline have been attributed to the incorporation of vices and such social poisons as alcohol and opium, attack of venereal diseases, quick adoption of foreign customs and modes of life which have been proved incongenial in their own environmental context and also to the gradual 'loss of interest in life.' This loss of interest in life, according to Rivers[1] takes away from the people the desire to live and to shoulder the burden of life, with the result that mortality incidence goes high and the more obvious causes of mortality like new diseases, the social poisons etc, tend to have greater potency for

1 Rivers, W. H. R—Essays on the depopulation of Malanesia (Ed). 1922.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

attributed to scarcity of food, nor can nutrition have had any effect on the demographic decadence. Strict endogamy over thousands of years, and fragmentation into smaller and smaller groups is perhaps a more likely explanation of the situation. The last stage has now been reached; the Arioto, for instance, who numbered six hundred and twenty-five in the 1901 census, had dwindled to twenty-three in 1955. In that year there were only two young children, a boy and a girl (of different parents) and the girl, about five years old, clearly had a Burmese father. The boy, however, named Sirake and then aged about eleven, intelligent and alert, with the very blue-black skin of the Andamanese and typical hair, may well be of pure stock. He is the only hope of continuing the ancient Arioto line, but this will be impossible unless a girl of pure stock is born shortly.

This seems unlikely. With the exception of these two couples, the Arioto appear to be sterile. I have myself seen their sorrow at being deprived of children, and one of them, named Moro, of fairly pure stock, told me of his grief. He took me to his wife, also of pure Andamanese origin, and externally as normal and healthy as her husband, but deserted by the spirits of fertility. Through no fault of their own, the cause probably lies in both of them.

In all the Andamanese, fertility seems always to have increased from the age of twenty-eight and to end by the age of forty-eight – in many cases thirty-eight, although since none of them know their age, owing to the absence of any form of counting, their deceptively youthful appearance makes assessment of age extremely difficult. I met only one woman who, as far as I could estimate, had borne seven children, and of these only three were still alive in 1954; the widespread custom by which children are transferred from one family to another, even during the period of lactation, to 'share' the enjoyment of them, made all the usual means of assessing the number of births virtually impossible. In a number of childless couples whom I saw on Little Andaman, the women are under twenty-eight and there is still hope of fertility, even if it is late. This could happen in the case of the wives of the two leaders Cocheggi and Cendubài; these two men married two sisters, among the healthiest and most beautiful women on the island, Vaghèghe and Tocuaghèghe, both under twenty-two. Neither of them has ever been pregnant, although both are apparently normal and

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

842 163 enjoy the active marital relationships necessary, according to their husbands, to encourage the entry of the benevolent spirits which bring motherhood. The late onset of fertility in all Andamanese women and perhaps in men as well[1] probably depends on mechanisms which have been operating for a very long time, affecting the sex ratio at birth, and preferential infant mortality in one sex. By a combination of observation and deduction I was able to be reasonably certain that among the Onges at least more males are born than females. The disparity is reduced, though not eliminated, by a higher mortality rate in young males. Males thus remain in excess, making it difficult for some, possibly fertile, to find wives.

842 143 161 There are certain peoples – notably the Pitcairn Islanders – who have arisen by repeated inbreeding for hundreds of years from a very few individuals. It is clear from this example that genetic isolation and inbreeding cannot of themselves cause numerical, physical or mental decline of a population. The problem merits further investigation. Civilization has perhaps accused herself unjustly of causing the decline of primitive races, whereas she has in fact only hastened the disappearance of groups already heading for demographic decadence as the result of physiological factors which lie within the group itself, and which are consequently difficult to counteract. The intrinsic damage done by civilization as such has, in my opinion, been considerably exaggerated in some quarters.

855 597 Possibly because of the low birth rate the maternal instinct is very highly developed in the women of the Andamans, even to the point of 'adopting' children temporarily. These children are always given lavish affection, and are kept sometimes for years, or even permanently if the parents do not ask for them back. Given the language barrier, this custom makes census-taking difficult as childless couples happily declare adopted children as their own. Nabimbòi, with no children of her own, always had children with her, and it was only the fact that they differed from year to year that led me to suspect what was happening! One wonders whether the custom was not already common before outsiders first came to the Andamans, owing to the existence of a high incidence of sterility long before the arrival of civilization.

[1] There is some evidence of infertility in the men, but it is clear that this is of relatively minor importance.